

21ST CENTURY CHARTER SCHOOL

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT #1

DETAILED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT & PROFILE



302 S. Meridian Street • Indianapolis, Indiana 46225

Phone: (317) 524-3750 • www.21ccharter.org/union

This supplemental report presents information about the school in three sections:

- 21st Century Charter School's Students (enrollment and demographic information)
- Performance at 21st Century Charter School
- Detailed Description of 21st Century Charter School's Programs and Activities (as provided by the school)

2005



21ST CENTURY CHARTER SCHOOL DETAILED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT & PROFILE

STUDENTS

21st Century Charter School

A

ENROLLMENT AND DEMAND

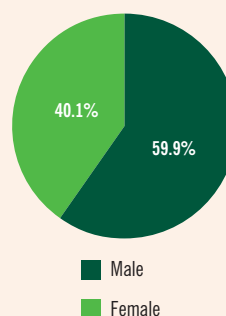
	2004-05	At Capacity
Grades served	K-8	K-12
Maximum possible enrollment, pursuant to charter	186	390
Number of students enrolled ¹	187	N/A
Number of students on waiting list ²	131	N/A

¹Source: Indiana Department of Education website, based on school's Pupil Enrollment Count reported every October. ■ ²Source: School self-report of data, as of August 1, 2005. ■ N/A denotes "Not Applicable." A school may elect to maintain a smaller overall enrollment than that allowed by its Charter with the Mayor's Office. Actual enrollment may exceed the maximum enrollment stated in the Charter by 10%. It is possible that a school may have a waiting list but not be fully enrolled because waiting list figures are aggregated across grades; some grades may be fully enrolled and have waiting lists while others do not.

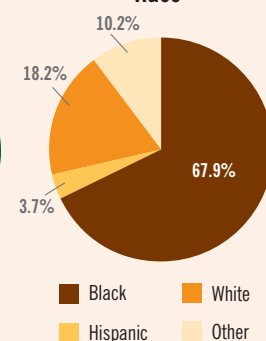
B

STUDENT COMPOSITION

Gender¹



Race¹



	21st Century Charter School
Free/Reduced-Price Lunch ¹	55.6%
Special Education ²	15.5%
Limited English Proficiency ³	0.0%

¹Source: Indiana Department of Education website, based on school's Pupil Enrollment Count reported every October. ■ ²Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Exceptional Learners, count reported December 2004. ■ ³Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Language and Minority Programs, count reported March 2005. ■ See main report for comparative data.

PERFORMANCE

The section below describes 21st Century Charter School's (21st Century) performance over its third school year by addressing the common performance indicators in the Mayor's Charter School Performance Framework. The complete Performance Framework may be viewed on-line at <http://www.indygov.org/eGov/Mayor/Education/Charter/Accountability/2005/home.htm>.

In some areas, this section also provides information about the school's performance in 2002-03 and 2003-04 as compared to its performance in 2004-05. For additional information on how performance has changed, view the *2003 and 2004 Accountability Reports on Mayor-Sponsored Charter Schools*, also available on-line at the website listed above.

The Mayor's Office conducts evaluations of school performance using a variety of measurement tools, including visits by a multi-member site evaluation team, independent surveys of parents and staff, and expert analysis of standardized test score data. Each section of the following text notes the specific tools used. Supplemental Report 12 contains a complete description of evaluation mechanisms used to prepare this report.

IS THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

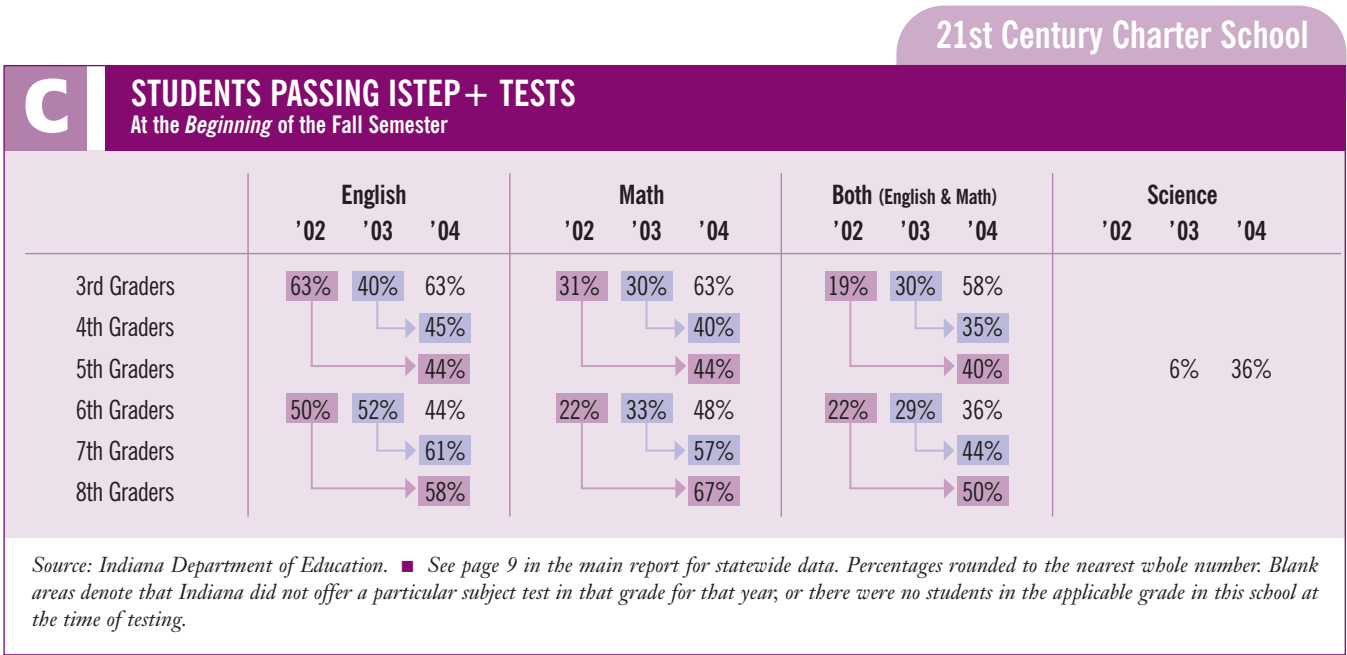
IS THE SCHOOL MAKING ADEQUATE YEARLY ACADEMIC PROGRESS, AS MEASURED BY THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY?

Performance on the statewide assessment

■ **CHART C** displays the percentage of 21st Century 3rd through 8th graders who received passing scores on ISTEP+ examinations in fall 2004 and, where applicable, the percentage passing in 2002 and 2003. It is not possible to use these results to measure individual students' progress over time because each grade's test results pertain to different students in 2002 and 2003 versus 2004. However,

simple comparisons of the percent passing give an indication of general student performance trends at the school. The arrows in this figure compare the percent passing in a particular grade as it progressed to the next grade (e.g., how 3rd graders in 2003 performed as 4th graders in 2004 and how 3rd graders in 2002 performed as 5th graders in 2004). For example, 40% of 3rd graders passed the English ISTEP+ in 2003, while 45% passed as 4th graders in 2004. As shown

below, pass rates improved for all years and subjects in which comparable data is available, except for the pass rate for the 2004 5th grade English exam as compared to the same cohort's 3rd grade pass rate in 2002. As ISTEP+ continues to be administered in all grades, the Mayor's Office will be able to determine how much progress individual students in this school make on these tests over time.



Adequate Yearly Progress

21st Century made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2005, as determined by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). Federal No Child Left Behind legislation requires the IDOE to

determine AYP for each public school in Indiana, including charter schools in operation during the 2003-04 school year. The IDOE determines whether each school makes AYP based on the percentage of students who were enrolled

in the school for a full year that passed the English and mathematics ISTEP+ tests. In addition, each elementary and middle school must raise or maintain high attendance rates. ■ **CHART D** below shows 21st Century's AYP determinations.

21st Century Charter School

<div> <div>D</div> <div> ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS As Determined by the Indiana Department of Education </div> </div>				
Overall Determination: Yes	English	Math	Attendance	Participation Rate ¹
All students	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Black, not of Hispanic origin	Yes	Yes		Yes
White, not of Hispanic origin				
Free/reduced-price lunch				
<p>Source: Indiana Department of Education. ■ AYP determinations are required by the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. Blank areas denote that the Indiana Department of Education concluded that it was not possible to make a determination in the particular category for this school. The Indiana Department of Education also concluded that it was not possible to make a determination in other subgroups (e.g., Hispanic, Limited English Proficient, or Special Education) for any of the Mayor-sponsored charter schools; thus these categories are not included in this figure. Attendance Rate determination is only made for "All Students," not for subgroups. ■ ¹To meet AYP goals, 95% of eligible students must participate in testing.</p>				

ARE STUDENTS MAKING ADEQUATE AND SUBSTANTIAL GAINS OVER TIME?

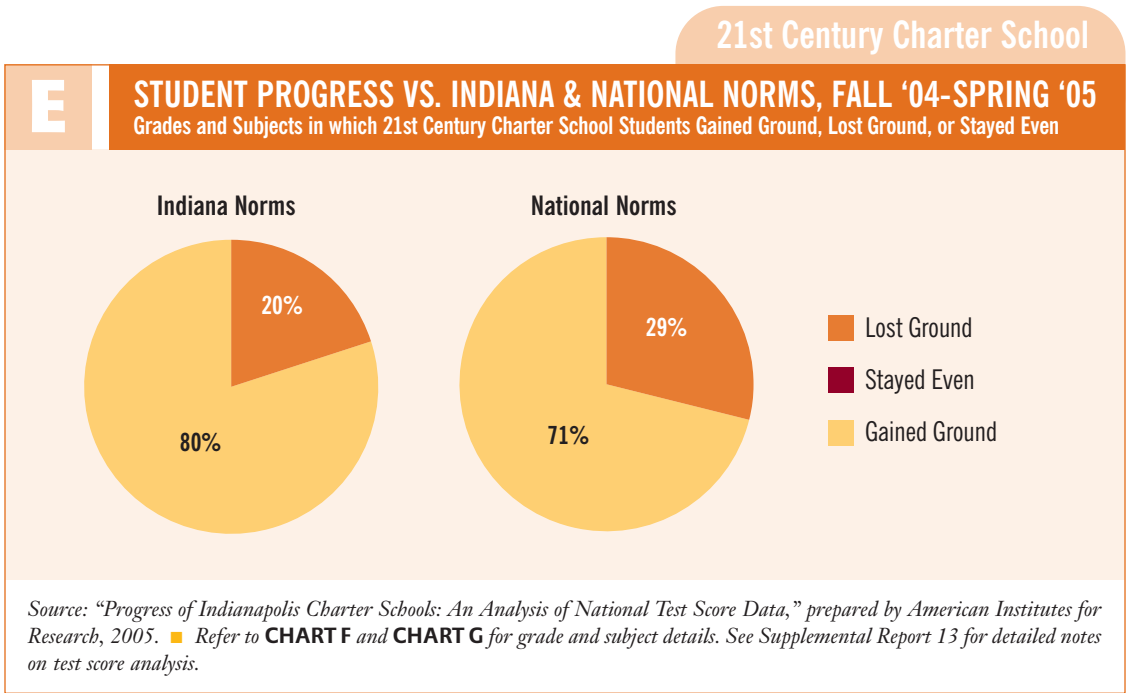
Charter schools administered the highly-regarded Northwest Evaluation Association’s (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test in reading, math, and language in both the fall and the spring. American Institutes for Research (AIR), a major nonprofit research organization, analyzed the results for the Mayor’s Office to answer two questions about how much students learned over the course of the 2004-05 academic year:

- Did students gain ground, lose ground, or stay even relative to their peers nationally and in Indiana?
- What proportion of students made sufficient progress to reach proficiency over time?

Comparative Gains: How much did 21st Century Charter School students improve relative to their peers?

AIR was able to compare the average gains of students at 21st Century with

those of students across Indiana (■ **CHART F**) and the US (■ **CHART G**). The figures show where 21st Century students gained ground, lost ground, or stayed even relative to their peers. As the pie charts below show, 21st Century students gained ground relative to their Indiana peers in twelve out of fifteen (80%) grades and subjects (■ **CHART E**). They gained ground relative to their national peers in twelve out of seventeen (71%) grades and subjects (■ **CHART E**).





ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

21st Century Charter School vs. Indiana Norms (IN), Fall 2004 Through Spring 2005

Grade/Subject	21st Century Charter School Gains vs. IN Gains		Gained or Lost Ground		
	School Gains	IN Gains	Gained Ground	Stayed Even	Lost Ground
2nd Grade Math	13.1	-			
2nd Grade Reading	7.8	-			
2nd Grade Language	16.0	-			
3rd Grade Math	14.4	10.6	3.8		
3rd Grade Reading	12.2	9.0	3.2		
3rd Grade Language	15.7	8.5	7.2		
4th Grade Math	13.3	8.8	4.5		
4th Grade Reading	17.5	6.8	10.7		
4th Grade Language	10.8	5.8	5.0		
5th Grade Math	9.9	9.0	0.9		
5th Grade Reading	11.0	5.9	5.1		
5th Grade Language	5.9	5.2	0.7		
6th Grade Math	8.0	9.1			-1.1
6th Grade Reading	7.9	5.3	2.6		
6th Grade Language	9.2	4.1	5.1		
7th Grade Math	6.1	7.3			-1.2
7th Grade Reading	3.9	4.1			-0.2
7th Grade Language	7.0	3.0			
8th Grade Math	*	7.0			
8th Grade Reading	*	4.1			
8th Grade Language	*	3.2			

How to Read this Figure: The fourth row, as an example, under the Grade/Subject column is 3rd grade math. The numbers in that row show that 3rd grade students at 21st Century made an average gain of 14.4 points, compared to 10.6 points for the average IN student. These students “gained ground” compared to the average IN student because their average gains were 3.8 points higher.

Source: “Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data,” prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005. ■ A notation of “*” indicates no growth data are reported because fewer than ten students had growth data in this grade and subject. This follows the Indiana Department of Education policy of not reporting performance data when the number of students tested falls below ten (Indiana Department of Education Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook, June 2005, p. 31). A notation of “-” indicates that no comparison data are available for that grade and subject. Students are said to have “gained ground” or “lost ground” if their average growth differed from that of the norm group to a statistically significant degree. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.



ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

21st Century Charter School vs. National Norms (US), Fall 2004 Through Spring 2005

21st Century Charter School Gains vs. US Gains			Gained or Lost Ground		
Grade/Subject	School Gains	US Gains	Gained Ground	Stayed Even	Lost Ground
2nd Grade Math	13.1	15.7			-2.6
2nd Grade Reading	7.8	14.9			-7.1
2nd Grade Language	16.0	-			
3rd Grade Math	14.4	11.8	2.6		
3rd Grade Reading	12.2	10.4	1.8		
3rd Grade Language	15.7	9.3	6.4		
4th Grade Math	13.3	8.9	4.4		
4th Grade Reading	17.5	7.4	10.1		
4th Grade Language	10.8	6.5	4.3		
5th Grade Math	9.9	8.8	1.1		
5th Grade Reading	11.0	6.3	4.7		
5th Grade Language	5.9	5.8	0.1		
6th Grade Math	8.0	8.1			-0.1
6th Grade Reading	7.9	5.3	2.6		
6th Grade Language	9.2	4.5	4.7		
7th Grade Math	6.1	6.9			-0.8
7th Grade Reading	3.9	4.3			-0.4
7th Grade Language	7.0	3.6	3.4		
8th Grade Math	*	7.1			
8th Grade Reading	*	4.2			
8th Grade Language	*	3.5			

How to Read this Figure: The first row, as an example, under the Grade/Subject column is 2nd grade math. The numbers in that row show that 2nd grade students at 21st Century made an average gain of 13.1 points, compared to 15.7 points for the average US student. These students “lost ground” compared to the average US student because their average gains were 2.6 points lower.

Source: “Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data,” prepared by American Institutes for Research, 2005. ■ A notation of “*” indicates no growth data are reported because fewer than ten students had growth data in this grade and subject. This follows the Indiana Department of Education policy of not reporting performance data when the number of students tested falls below ten (Indiana Department of Education Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook, June 2005, p. 31). A notation of “-” indicates that no comparison data are available for that grade and subject. Students are said to have “gained ground” or “lost ground” if their average growth differed from that of the norm group to a statistically significant degree. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on test score analysis.

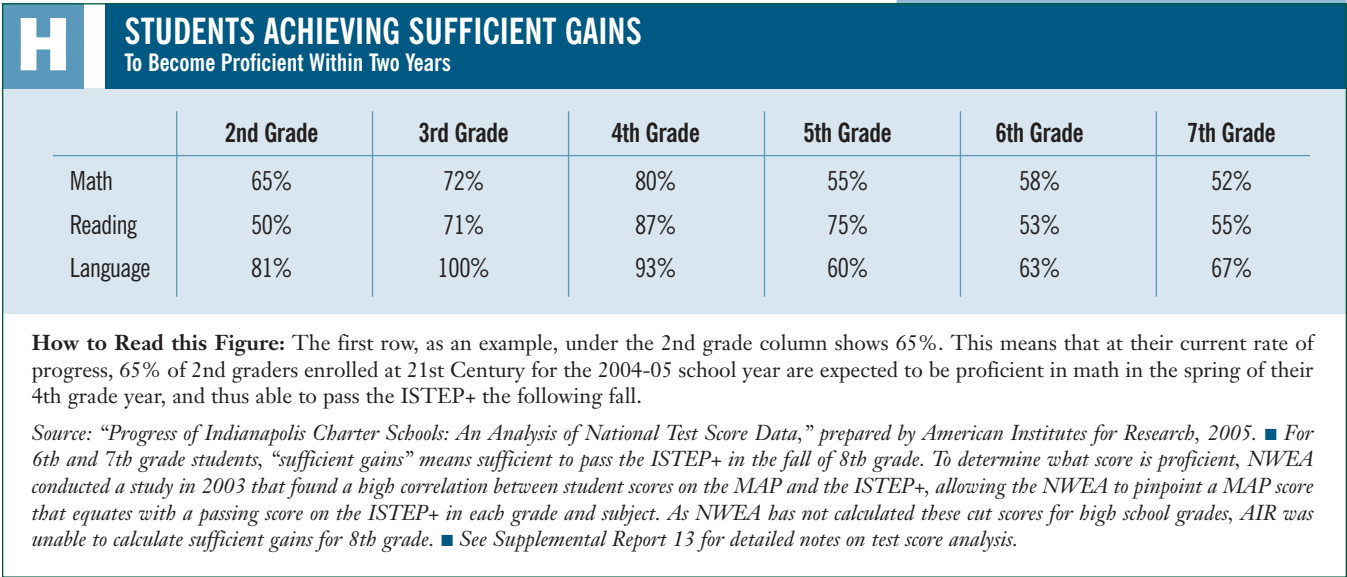
Sufficient Gains: What proportion of students is on track to reach proficiency?

AIR projected each 21st Century student’s *future* MAP test score based on the gain he or she achieved between fall 2004 and spring 2005. If the student continued to gain at the same rate, would

he or she be proficient in the subject within two years, and therefore able to pass the ISTEP+ the following fall? If so, he or she made “sufficient gains.” This year’s standard for “sufficient gains” is considerably higher than in last year’s report, in which AIR counted a student’s gains as “sufficient” if the student would

become proficient by 8th grade – a relatively long time horizon for younger students. This year, the analysis projects out no more than two years for any student. AIR calculated the percentage of students who made sufficient gains in each subject and grade. ■ **CHART H** displays the results.

21st Century Charter School



IS THE ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVE AND WELL-RUN?

Is the school in sound fiscal health?

The Mayor's Office commissioned an outside accounting firm to review each school's finances. The accounting firm reported that 21st Century managed its financial practices satisfactorily during the past year, with no significant problems. Supplemental Report 11 contains financial statements and a summary of the school's finances.

The expert site visit team also noted that the school appears to be moving in the appropriate direction to ensure its financial health.

The Indiana State Board of Accounts (ISBA) completed an audit of 21st Century's 2002-03 school year in April 2004; results were not available in time to be included in last year's Accountability Report. The ISBA found that 21st Century's financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the cash and investment balances and cash receipts and disbursements for the year ending June 30, 2003.

Are the school's student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?

The school's attendance rate was 96.3% in 2004-05 (■ **CHART I**). During the site team visits, the leaders of 21st Century reported that recent application and enrollment figures have been strong. The site team commended the school for maintaining a database on student attrition that enables them to analyze the reasons for transferring given by those families leaving the school.

Is the school's Board active and competent in its oversight?

Governance reviews conducted by the Mayor's Office in 2004-05 reveal that the 21st Century Board of Directors engaged in detailed discussion at Board meetings regarding decisions that affect the school. During one of the school's Board meetings, the site team observed Board members asking questions related to their areas of expertise, and requesting that the school's administrators explain items that

were unclear. The Board met five times in 2004-05 and rescheduled one meeting.

The expert site visit team noted the broad range of expertise among the ten members of the Board. In his interview with the site team, the school's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) expressed a goal of strengthening the Board's involvement in "critical school affairs such as school accountability, ensuring that policies are sufficient and effective, budget, serving as school ambassadors in the community and fundraising."

The expert site team also pointed out the need to maintain high levels of effective communication between the school and the GEO Foundation, the nonprofit organization that created the school and continues to provide administrative and financial support to the school. In particular, the team recommended that the school's Board examine its composition and continue to clarify all leadership roles.

21st Century Charter School

ATTENDANCE RATE IN 2004-05 SCHOOL YEAR

	Attendance Rate
21st Century Charter School	96.3%
Indianapolis Public Schools	94.2%
All Indiana Public Schools	95.9%

Source: Indiana Department of Education website, preliminary figures.

Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?

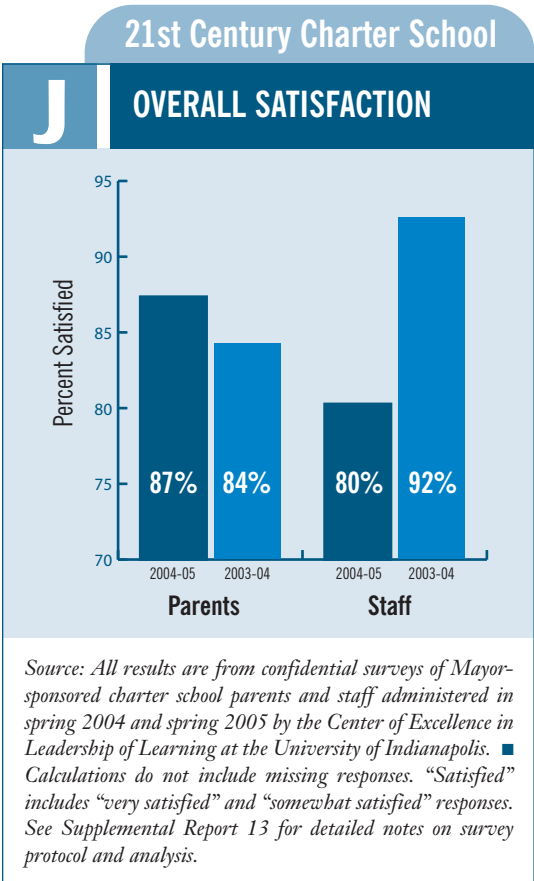
■ **CHART J** shows how 21st Century parents responded to a question about their overall satisfaction with the school. In total, 87% of parents surveyed said that they were satisfied overall with 21st Century, up from 84% a year ago. Staff satisfaction levels decreased to 80% from 92% last year. As seen in ■ **CHART K**, 85% of parents say they are likely to recommend the school to others, and 88% plan to return to the school next year. However, only half of the staff surveyed report they are likely to

recommend the school to others. Nonetheless, 88% say they are likely to return to the school next year.

■ **CHART L** shows how well parents and staff rated specific features of the school. The top-rated features for both parents and staff are highlighted in blue; the lowest-rated features are highlighted in crimson. Roughly three-quarters (73%) of the parents surveyed rated the overall quality of education at 21st Century as “excellent” or “very good”; by comparison, less than half (47%) of the staff gave the same ratings. The school features most frequently identified as

“excellent” or “very good” by parents and staff were access to computers and opportunities for parental involvement. Parents and staff gave the fewest positive ratings to the location of the school.

Parents who participated in the expert site team’s focus groups noted that the school met their expectations for subjects taught (e.g., reading, writing, math, respect, values, and technology), adding that they both like and respect the school. Parents and students report that the school has “dedicated,” “caring,” and “experienced” teachers.



21st Century Charter School

K PARENTS AND STAFF WHO ARE LIKELY TO...

	Parents	Staff
Recommend the school to friends and colleagues	85%	50%
Return to the school next year	88%	88%

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Calculations include “extremely likely” and “very likely” responses. Calculations do not include missing responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

21st Century Charter School

L

PARENTS AND STAFF EVALUATION

Excellent/Very Good Responses of Select Features

	Parents	Staff
Overall quality of education	73%	47%
Quality of teaching/instruction	57%	71%
Curriculum/academic program	68%	56%
Individualized student attention	50%	65%
Access to/use of computers and other technologies	83%	71%
School material and supplies	41%	27%
Classroom management	33%	31%
Student-teacher ratio/class size	55%	63%
Services provided to special needs students ¹	59%	40%
Support services (e.g., counseling, healthcare, inc.)	47%	20%
Opportunities for parental involvement	83%	80%
Communication about student learning/achievement	66%	81%
Communication about meeting the school's mission	50%	41%
Teacher professional development	54%	25%
Faculty/teachers	62%	69%
School administration	57%	40%
School board	62%	57%
School facilities	50%	19%
Food service	48%	40%
Transportation services	46%	47%
Enrollment/admission process	57%	47%
School size	53%	67%
School safety	61%	69%
School location	31%	25%

■ Highest Percentages of Excellent/Very Good Responses

■ Lowest Percentages of Excellent/Very Good Responses

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staff administered in spring 2005 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis. ■ Individual features with the highest percentage of excellent/very good responses are highlighted in blue; features with the lowest percentage of excellent/very good responses are highlighted in crimson. "Excellent" and "very good" responses are on a five-point scale (scale also includes "good," "fair," and "poor"). Calculations do not include missing and "don't know" responses. See Supplemental Report 13 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis. ■ ¹Special needs students include those for whom English is a second language or who have disabilities, academic difficulties, etc.

Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?

According to the governance reviews by the Mayor's Office, the school was strong in organizational leadership in 2004-05. 21st Century continues to have a clear division of responsibilities between academic and organizational duties. The Principal, in particular, demonstrated strong leadership abilities in 2004-05; he manages the daily operations of the school and coordinates all interactions with students, teachers and parents. The CEO ensures that the school complies with the charter and oversees staff to ensure all reporting requirements are met. With the departure of the Chief

Academic Officer (CAO) during the 2004-05 school year, there was a period of transition among the staff members who were responsible for reporting to the IDOE and the Mayor's Office. During the transition, the school's staff met all compliance and reporting obligations during the transition with two exceptions. As noted below, the school had difficulty meeting the IDOE's reporting requirement for submitting the counts of Average Daily Membership (ADM) in a timely manner.

Comments made during the site team visits echoed the governance findings above: "All constituents agree that the CEO and Principal are 'strong,' 'dedicated to the school,' 'available,' and

'responsive to identifying issues and making changes when they are needed.'" Moreover, academic and organizational leaders alike report clear roles and responsibilities, as well as good communication and working relationships.

The team noted that the teachers, parents, and Board did not know the immediate or long-term goals for the school. The site visit team recommended that the school develop a process to identify and articulate such goals, accompanied by relevant action plans.

IS THE SCHOOL MEETING ITS OPERATIONS AND ACCESS OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO:

organizational structure and governance obligations; physical plants that are safe and conducive to learning; fair and appropriate pupil enrollment processes; reasonable and safe transportation options available to eligible students; and legal obligations related to access and services to special needs and English as a second language students?

21st Century satisfactorily met its obligations in 2004-05 in complying with relevant laws and regulations and in providing access to students across Indianapolis. Neither the Mayor's Office's internal systems nor the expert site visit team indicated any significant concerns related to these obligations. The year-end governance review found the school had satisfactorily maintained the compliance binder which contains all of the school's governance, management, and organizational documents and is reviewed by the Mayor's Office on a monthly basis.

However, 21st Century did not submit the corrections to the first ADM report

taken in September 2004 by the deadline of December 1, 2004. In addition, the school did have difficulty meeting the IDOE reporting requirement to submit the second ADM enrollment report due in December 2004 in a timely manner.

Specific site team findings in the area of operations and access obligations include:

- School leaders have been diligent in improving the Union Station facility but it is evident that the new facility being built will provide a more satisfactory space for learning.
- School leaders report that they implemented a fair pupil enrollment process and that they maintain a wait

list from which to draw new students as space becomes available.

- The school provides an extensive and expensive transportation system to ensure that students from around the city have access to the school.
- School leaders report that special education is an "area of growth" and attention. In the site team's parent focus groups, nonetheless, several parents of students with special needs reported that "the school has provided extra support and services to ensure learning (e.g., speech therapy, physical therapy, glasses, and extra academic support)."

IS THE SCHOOL PROVIDING THE APPROPRIATE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS?

Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?

The expert site visit team indicated that all stakeholders interviewed both understand and support the mission of 21st Century. The site team commended the school for its clear vision and promotion of student learning and achievement.

Last year the expert site team suggested that the school consider diversifying its instructional methods beyond the use of instructional technology. Teachers noted particular improvements in this arena in focus groups. Teachers reported to the team that "there is better balance between time spent learning on-line and off-line."

When asked about how well the school communicates its mission, only 50% of the parents and 41% of staff surveyed answered "excellent" or "very good" (■ CHART L).

Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?

In interviews with the expert site team, both the Principal and teachers reported that the school has found a good balance between delivering the curriculum on- and off-line. During the site team's visits to classrooms, they observed teachers delivering direct instruction, providing experiential learning activities (e.g., manipulative materials in math and science), overseeing student writing, and working with students one-on-one or in small groups. The team also noted that classrooms seemed to have adequate resources and supplies, with most teachers reporting they had the supplies necessary to be effective. The school's library was also commended for its improvements in the areas of reading materials available and the presence of a parent volunteer as a part-time librarian.

The academic program was among the top-rated features by parents. However, only 27% of staff surveyed rated access to

school material and supplies as either "excellent" or "very good" (■ CHART L). The site team found that teacher understanding of their materials budgets, and appropriate reimbursement procedures, varies tremendously. The team suggested that the school ensure that all teachers know what funds are available and how they can be accessed.

According to the site visit team, one ongoing area for attention is the level of rigor of the school's computer-based A+ Learning System. Other specific curriculum concerns were the rigor and effectiveness of the Spanish curriculum and the coordination of the curriculum across grade levels and subjects.

Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?

The expert site visit team noted that, as in past site visits, the school is "data driven," with a commitment by leaders and staff to use data for improved instruction. The site team found that teachers use NWEA and ISTEP+ results to better understand student learning needs. Additionally, one of the noted strengths of the computer-based A+ Learning System is the information available daily about student learning, including goals, objectives, and critical vocabulary. According to the site team, teachers report that students who succeed on the A+ curriculum tend to perform well on ISTEP+ and other standardized tests.

In teacher-directed learning situations, the team recommended that teachers "might consider whether they consistently identify and make students aware of the specific standards, goals and critical vocabulary (e.g., by writing on the board or including these items in instructions and assignments) that are being taught." Moreover, the team indicated that "the specific process used or the extent to which 21st Century teachers explicitly align lessons with

Indiana [State Academic Standards for each] grade-level" is unclear.

The site visit team commended the school's teachers for designing learning projects focused on the Indiana State Academic Standards that integrated writing and research, included group activities, and involved community-based learning. The site team echoed the school's self-identified need to create a system to ensure that all student projects are standards-based and provide high-quality learning experiences.

Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?

Parents reported to the expert site visit team that they like the school's "atmosphere," specifically mentioning features like the extended school year, small groups and class sizes, transportation, the music program, discipline and uniforms, and the use of technology. Parents and teachers reported to the site team that the school is "safe," "staff are open and available," "supportive," and "caring." According to the team, "they also agree that the school is orderly and, overall, students are disciplined and well-behaved. Teachers report that they work well with the Principal and that they receive periodic feedback." Teachers also noted the Principal's availability to help with student-related concerns, and characterized the school as vigilant in identifying issues and implementing solutions.

Only 25% of staff surveyed were satisfied with the school's opportunities for professional development (■ CHART L). The expert site visit team reported that the school provides two weeks of professional development time for teachers each summer and reorganized the teaching schedule to provide teachers with two fifty-minute planning periods each day.

Parents interviewed by the site team also mentioned their desire for an on-duty nurse for medical emergencies at the school.

Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?

21st Century's approach to teaching combines innovative technology-based learning, small group instruction and project-based learning to allow students to learn at their own individual pace. The site team emphasized that this use of mixed teaching methods is made possible by the on-line nature of the A+ curriculum, which allows groups of students to work at an individualized pace, while others work with teachers and peers on lessons and projects.

The site visit team identified several instructional areas for attention, notably a need for the school to focus on identifying students who are not learning well using current teaching methods – considering their specific weaknesses and needs to design teaching strategies that will more effectively meet their needs. An additional area of improvement that the site team identified was better integration of on- and off-line work, accompanied by

greater rigor in off-line work. Lastly, the team reported that the school could work on identifying students who are above grade level or academically gifted, and tailoring work for them.

Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?

As seen in ■ **CHART L**, two-thirds of the parents surveyed and 81% of staff rated communication about student learning either “excellent” or “very good.” Those parents who attended the site visit team focus group also reported that they understand what their child is learning. As reported earlier, 50% of parents surveyed and 41% of staff gave “excellent” or “very good” ratings for communication on meeting the school's mission (■ **CHART L**).

The expert site visit team commended 21st Century for the variety of ways in which parents are, or can be, involved, including: parent representation on the Board, Saturday workshops on how parents can help their students learn,

required parent-teacher progress report conferences, parent-teacher-student organization meetings, daily homework, a weekly newsletter, and participation in classroom projects and school trips. Nonetheless, school leaders and staff report challenges to getting parents sufficiently involved.

Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?

According to the expert site visit team, 21st Century hired additional staff for the 2004-05 school year and, as its enrollment expands, “continues to seek and hire licensed, qualified teachers who believe in and can develop competence in supporting on-line and delivering off-line learning.” The site visit team praised the school's use of learning guides in the classroom, and its low student to teacher ratio. The team identified staff evaluation as one area of human resource management in need of future focus. The Principal reported that he intends to improve the formal evaluation process for teachers.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

Source: The information below was provided by the school to the Mayor's Office. It is included here to offer the public a more detailed picture of the school's programs and activities.

Mission, philosophy, and educational program

21st Century is dedicated to ensuring that all students show growth in character, academics, life skills, the arts, and wellness, using teaching methods tailored to meet each student's needs. The school's philosophy is that each new skill must be mastered before the student moves on to the next task. 21st Century offers multi-age classrooms where students are grouped with peers in a two- or three-year age range, yet work at individualized instruction levels based on their current mastery of academic skills. Computer technology in every classroom serves to engage students in the learning process

and is used to track student mastery of the subject material. Each student has his or her own learning plan and goals, which are reviewed by staff and students each week. Parents receive detailed weekly reports documenting the lessons their children completed, the scores they received on assignments, and their mastery of new skills in each subject.

Throughout the day, students are engaged in three types of activities: small group instruction with a ten to one student to teacher ratio; practice and application of academic skills using computer-based curricula; and independent, project-based activities. Teachers align all three types of learning activities with the Indiana State

Academic Standards for each subject and grade level. The computer-based A+ Learning System curriculum provides students and teachers with instantaneous, specific feedback on students' knowledge of each subject. During the 2004-05 school year, teachers began to incorporate the course content guidelines of the Core Knowledge Sequence into the school's curriculum.

In full-day Kindergarten through 5th grade, students remain with a single teacher for their core academic courses. In grades 6 through 8, students attend classes with different science, language, and mathematics instructors to cover material in greater depth. As students grow, the

school provides opportunities for service learning, internships, college preparatory experiences, and college credit.

Academic programs and initiatives

- **Character Education.** All students attend character education classes two to three times per week. In the character education class students learn common values such as trust, responsibility, respect and ways of expression. Lessons are crafted around

ENGLISH LITERATURE CLASS

For English literature class, 8th grade students read the novel *Huckleberry Finn* and a book about the life of Sojourner Truth. After reading each book, the class attended performances of plays on the same subjects – “A Woman Named Truth” at the Indiana Repertory Theatre and “Huckleberry Finn” at Clowes Memorial Hall at Butler University. Book discussions were held before attending the plays to ensure students’ advance comprehension. Following the plays, the class held discussions comparing the books to the plays. Every student in the class also submitted an essay to the Indiana Repertory Theatre’s essay contest about Sojourner Truth.

special learning opportunities such as Disability Awareness Month and Black History Month. To reinforce character education lessons, older students have participated in service learning activities such as cleaning and painting a shelter for women and children.

- **Data Tracking and Reporting.** Teachers use the A+ Learning System data tracking and reporting programs to monitor academic growth on a continuing basis for each child, based on the student’s completion of computer lessons and assessments. This technology provides teachers with real-time information that allows them to target the areas where each student needs assistance. Weekly progress reports are sent home to parents,

documenting lessons completed and scores on assignments in each subject area. Parents are required to sign the reports and return them to the school. Students meet weekly with teachers during an advisory period to get feedback on their progress.

- **Music.** Every student at 21st Century receives regular music lessons, which include vocal skill building and learning to play keyboards, percussion, guitar, and bass. At the end of the year, every student recorded a personal CD featuring his or her own musical compositions.
- **Spanish.** Basic Spanish is introduced to all students in Kindergarten. Starting in 2nd grade, all students take Spanish classes two to three times per week.

Parent involvement

- **Parent Involvement in School Decisions.** Parents provide input into major decisions at the school through conversations with the school leadership and parent meetings on a particular topic. In the 2004-05 school year, parents contributed to the school’s plans for the development of the high school, advised on the dress code, and helped the school obtain grants for art programs and supplies.
- **Family Institute Days.** Family Institute Days are held on Saturday mornings each month for discussions between staff and parents. Family Institute topics have included: how to help students prepare for tests; safety at home and school; and math and reading strategies. Generally, at least 40% of parents participate in these meetings. Over 25 parents volunteered for a Family Institute Day devoted to spring cleanup and maintenance of the school.

Supplemental programs and activities

- **After-School Tutoring.** The school provides after-school tutoring to all students through a partnership with the GEO Foundation. Four licensed teachers lead this program; high school and college students participate as tutors and mentors.

- **Athletics.** All students attend physical education classes with the athletic director at least three times per week. After school, two boys’ basketball teams and one girls’ basketball team from 21st Century participated in the Indianapolis Police Athletics League and competed in a Midwest regional tournament in Fishers. Parent volunteers serve as the team coaches. Twenty students from grades 3 through 8 trained for a cross country meet in Noblesville. This spring, 21st Century also sponsored a track and field day held at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis for students from all Indianapolis charter schools.
- **Field Trips.** Middle school students (grades 6 through 8) traveled to Chicago to visit the Science and Technology Museum. Prior to the school visit, four teachers toured the museum to plan science and mathematics lessons related to the exhibits. Middle school students also went on a three-day camping trip to the YMCA’s Camp Tecumseh, where they participated in team building, leadership training, and problem solving activities. Students in grades 5 and 6 spent one month learning about space science prior to visiting the Indianapolis Challenger Learning Center in Decatur Township. 21st Century students received 500 out of 500 possible points for the math and science skills they displayed when their team role-played in a simulated mission control center.
- **Essay Contests.** To motivate students to write, English teachers encourage 21st Century students to participate in essay contests. In the 2004-05 school year, three students won first place prizes in the Martin University “March to My Own Drum” contest associated with Martin Luther King Day celebrations.

- **Service Activities.** Middle school students perform in-school community service two hours per week by tutoring younger students, answering phones, or serving as classroom helpers. Starting with the school’s first 9th grade class in

2005-06, high school students will be required to perform one hundred hours of community service.

Community partnerships and donations

- **Foundation Grants.** The Reilly Foundation contributed \$10,000 for the purchase of a piano and risers for the school's music room. The Challenge Foundation contributed \$25,000 to support the school's use of the Core Knowledge Sequence in its curriculum.
- **Holiday Rewards.** As the winter holiday season approached, students at 21st Century who wrote essays about charity and giving were rewarded with a surprise for participating. A Board member arranged the prize, which was a tour of the Indianapolis Colts' football facilities with team members. The twenty winning students (chosen by lottery from the forty essays submitted) also went shopping with the Colts players to spend \$200 gift certificates from Dick's Sporting Goods.
- **Pennies for Charity.** Students collected over \$500 in pennies during the school year, which were donated to The Leukemia Society. Parents helped count, roll, and organize the donation.
- **Music Program.** For the second year in a row, the grandparent of one student donated \$2,500 to help the school purchase additional musical instruments for the school, including a drum set, guitars, bass guitar, electric guitar, and keyboards.
- **Economic Literacy.** Girls, Inc. provides a nine-week hands-on economic literacy program for all female students. The program, taught during school hours, focuses on banking, stocks, and bonds, as well as the importance of savings, philanthropy, and budgeting.

Staffing

- **Summer Training Camp.** Prior to the start of the school year, all teachers participate in a two-week training camp. During this time, teachers learn

how to use the school's computer-based curriculum and how to adapt lessons for each student's needs. Teachers also develop strategies for using and analyzing assessment data.

- **Weekly Staff Meetings.** Throughout the school year, the entire staff of teachers and the school counselor meet weekly with the school's Principal. At these meetings, staff members share updates about their individual classes. Some of the meetings are devoted to professional development or to work on the school's accountability plan.

School management

21st Century's management team shares the responsibilities of leadership to ensure learning is the school's top priority at all times. The school's CEO, Kevin Teasley, who also serves as president of the GEO Foundation, is responsible for the school's overall operations and finances. The school's Principal, Dante Brown, is responsible for the day-to-day activities at the school. His primary responsibilities also include students' continued academic progress, oversight of classroom teachers, and engaging parents in the life of the school.

21st Century was created by the GEO Foundation, a nonprofit educational organization focused on creating more choices in education for all children. The GEO Foundation provided financial support for the school's start-up, and its management team provides oversight support for the school, community outreach support, and staff volunteers. The school contracts with the GEO Foundation for the portion of the school CEO's time devoted to the charter school's operations.

School governance

The Board of Directors for 21st Century consists of local business professionals, university leaders and community organization leaders. The Board includes expertise in banking and budgeting matters, Board development and involvement, nonprofit organizational

management, academic rigor and requirements, and community relations. The Board meets bi-monthly, and is active in helping the school succeed financially, operationally, and academically by concentrating on policy, finances, and academic achievement.

Facilities

21st Century was located in downtown Indianapolis in historic Union Station (a former train station) from 2002 to 2005. The school's open design allowed individuals to see from one end of the school to the other. The school was divided into six learning studios that surround a common area, and the space also includes kitchen facilities and a large group multi-purpose room. In August 2005, the school relocated to 25th and North Capitol Streets in the Near North neighborhood of Indianapolis. This brand new facility serves the growing enrollment at the school as it expands to include up to 390 students in Kindergarten through 12th grade.

STAFF DEDICATION

One eight year-old student was recently removed from his home and placed in a local guardian home. After being notified of the situation, the school's Principal and counselor picked the boy up for school the next day – providing an immediate opportunity for the child to express his anxiety to familiar adults. During the two weeks the student was at the guardian home, the school counselor drove an additional hour every day to pick him up and drop him off. The counselor also communicated regularly with the state social worker, and helped the student's grandparents gain custody of him. As a result, the student now lives with his grandparents, did not miss one day of school, and had the consistent support of the school during a time of great stress in his life.